

Talking to Donors about Planned Giving

Planned Giving is a process of relationship building both with potential donors and financial professionals that requires time and commitment. Donors who “invest” in non-profit organizations and institutions expect that their gifts will be used wisely when they are no longer around to monitor their use. Everyone in the organization must be educated so that they support and understand the Planned Giving Program.

The Planned Giving Program requires efficient and effective financial management. You will want to develop relationships with solid financial consultants and institutions, especially as you move toward more complicated planned giving opportunities. But know that regardless of your training, basic planned gift concepts are easy to understand, and in most cases, you will be talking to a donor about making a bequest to your organization.

Successful planned giving programs begin with informal “getting to know you” sessions, special events and communications and evolve over time into loyal partnerships focused on a shared interest...your organization’s mission.

Once you have identified a prospective planned giving donor, arrange a lunch, coffee or meeting to begin exploring their interest in legacy giving. Some suggested open-ended questions to foster a give-and-take dialog might be:

- How did you initially come to our organization?
- Is there a particular program within our mission that inspired your giving?
- How do you think we are doing at fulfilling our mission?
- What suggestions would you have to improve our services?
- Is there an area of the organization in which you could see yourself becoming more involved?

Depending on how well you know the prospect, you may want to schedule a second meeting to explore planned giving. If appropriate to continue, direct the conversation to future plans for the organization. Thank the prospect for their ongoing support. Talk about your own passion for the mission and how that led you to make a planned gift for future support of the organization. Explain that you would like to tell them about your legacy program and how you plan to use the gifts received.

As a result of the initial cultivation meetings; providing information about the program; and a better understanding of the potential giving level of the prospect, you may want to bring in a board leader or other key people. Questions you may want to ask of the prospect are:

- In addition to your ongoing support, would you consider making a planned or legacy gift?
- Would you like me to forward some information about our program to your financial advisor?
- Would it be helpful to have specific giving opportunities to consider?
- What do you think is the best service that the organization’s provides to the Community? Would you like to see this service expanded in the coming years? Would you be interested in talking about how you can help make this important service grows to serve more people?

- Would you consider putting our organization in your will?
- May I prepare a proposal for your review (and that of your advisor's) which will accomplish financial as well as charitable goals?
- Would you like to know the dreams of our organization for the future?
- Would you be interested in helping us realize these dreams with a gift from your estate? Would you rather consider ways to receive current income as well as being charitable?
- Life insurance is a popular way to give as some insurance policies may no longer be needed due to updated family circumstances. May I suggest that if you have such outdated policies, please consider a gift of life insurance which you no longer need. Would you like to learn more? Perhaps you might also like to update your policy beneficiaries? If so, would you consider our organization?
- With the approval of our Board of Directors, we are pleased to recognize Individuals who have provided us with intent to leave a planned gift to our organization. Would you be comfortable, now that we know of your gift intention, to review and sign this short, Letter of Intent form? May we recognize your commitment to our future on our Legacy Wall of Honor?